



Water Quality Initiative Begins

OFMC will be ensuring good facility conditions and proper testing at scores of Indian Affairs water treatment plants.

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The new central water treatment plant serving the Keams Canyon Agency on the Hopi Reservation in Arizona has been successfully implemented. Now OFMC is creating a plan to ensure the other 211 Indian Affairs-funded water treatment systems across Indian Country are meeting federal water quality standards. They range from small school-based systems such as Sanostee Day School's in New Mexico, a 2011 replacement school which required a complete infrastructure installation, to more community-oriented systems like the one at Keams Canyon.

OFMC's plan to ensure quality drinking water at all Indian Affairs-funded systems also would coincide with the spirit of the 2011 Settlement Agreement with the EPA, which focused on an egregious water quality problem—elevated arsenic levels in Keams Canyon drinking water—but is relevant to other water quality problems that exist at Indian Affairs-funded water systems.

“There is nothing more basic than ensuring American Indian students and community members have quality water to drink,” said OFMC Deputy Director Emerson Eskeets. “Because many of our locations are remote and the Indian Affairs-funded water system is the only source of quality water, we want to make sure the facilities and the operating and testing procedures are in place to provide reliable, quality water.”

Federal law requires school facility managers, who often operate the water systems, to regularly take samples for a variety of measures of water quality and (health) safety. The frequency of sampling and the measures used to examine water vary depending on the kind of system, i.e., school-only or community. By reviewing the water data at each facility, OFMC can address issues of water quality that result from design or operation problems.



Hopi Agency water treatment plant workers participate in training at the site of the plant in February.



The new water treatment plant.



Hopi Agency Certified Water Treatment Plant Operator Celestine Pablo checks out the interior of the new plant.



Water fountains at the renovated Keams Canyon Elementary School.